

As a result of the much greater increase in number of households (35%) than in population (16%), the average size of N.C. households declined about 14 percent to 2.78 persons in 1980. The average size of family households declined 9 percent to 3.25 persons. During the next two decades, it is expected that households will continue to grow at a faster rate than the population as family size continues to decline. (1,3,11)

While the number of persons under age 18 decreased by about 6 percent, the number of own children (never-married son, daughter, stepchild or adopted child of the household head) under 18 in married-couple families dropped by 12 percent during the decade. In 1980, nearly 17 percent (277,791) of own children under 18 resided with a single parent. By family type, the mean numbers of own children were: 1.8 in married-couple families, 1.6 in male-householder/no wife families, 1.9 in female-householder/no husband families. (1,2,11)

By and large, the preceding changes in household structure reflect the effects of a net decline in the marriage rate in concert with a net increase in the divorce rate between 1970 and 1980. The following statements summarize:

- Following continuous decline between 1970 and 1976, N.C.'s marriage rate rose to 7.9 per 1,000 population in 1977 and to 8.0 in 1979 and 1980, limiting the net decrease to 16 percent between census years. The 1981 rate was 8.1 and the 1982 rate, 8.5.
- For each 100 marriages in North Carolina, there were 62 divorces in 1981 versus 28 in 1970. The state's 1980 rate of 4.8 divorces per 1,000 population broke a 13-year period of increase, but the rate rose in 1981 to 5.0. The U.S. experienced a similar trend, to an estimated rate of 5.3 in 1981 (19). The N.C. rate was down slightly to 4.9 in 1982.

The number of persons 65 and over increased by nearly 46 percent during the decade. In average size, households to which these persons belonged decreased 22 percent from 1.66 to 1.30 persons. Not surprisingly, the number of institutionalized persons 65 and over nearly doubled during the decade to 27,287. This figure represents 4.5 percent of all persons 65 and over; the 1970 percentage was 3.4. Institutions include nursing and custodial care homes, hospitals and wards for the sick, disabled and aged as well as correctional institutions. (1,2)

When measured by the presence of adequate plumbing facilities, the quality of N.C. housing improved substantially during the decade as the number of year-round units lacking complete facilities dropped 54 percent to 115,928. As measured by the presence of 1.01 or more persons per room, the number of "overcrowded" housing units dropped 39 percent to 91,854. Still, in 1980, overcrowded households involved nearly 564,000 North Carolinians, and among